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ABSTRACT

Youth did not create the circumstances in which they live, but adults often ignore mediating circumstances and blame and bash youth, instead of providing help and guidance. This is evident in policies and attitudes toward youth that are punitive and harsh in nature. Many adults see youth as a culture to be feared or devalued because the media characteristically present youth negatively, particularly in news stories. The educational terrain is no exception to this trend; the urgency to increase student achievement has persisted. Current students, however, face unprecedented circumstances in a high accountability, high-stakes testing environment, where labeling schools as failing on the front page of newspapers has become common practice. Youth should be viewed as a critical resource. This paper outlines eight factors that illustrate some of the many things about youth to celebrate and eight things that adults should be doing for youth. Drawing upon work by Mary McCaslin and Eleanor DiMarino-Linnen, the paper argues that one powerful way to think about affecting social change in attitudes toward youth, which ultimately would affect how youth are treated, is based on a small wins approach. It defines this approach as the acceptance of small successes in pursuit of larger, more complicated ones. (Contains 41 references, 1 figure, 2 tables, and 7 notes.) (BT)

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# Inadequate Societal Expectations for American Youth: Numerous but Acutely Contradictory[1]

SO 035 058

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*Americans who extort the need for our youth to be "world class" should take pleasure in knowing that America leads the world in the number of high school students who work while enrolled in school.*

— Authors

*Union members, Army recruits, even trained animals get scheduled breaks during their workday. But not schoolchildren. With an increasing focus on standardized tests, many educators say there simply isn't time for fun and games.*

—Ohanian, 2002

## Introduction

The social culture is replete with information about the value of youth and their relation to the broader society. In the movie, *West Side Story*, there is a scene in the local soda shop where the protagonist Tony is informed (or misled) that his love interest Maria, had been shot. After hearing plans of revenge by Tony's friends, the "adult" shop owner decries, "when do you kids stop! You make this world lousy!" A member of the Jets gang responds solemnly, but authoritatively, "We didn't make it, Doc." This poignantly illustrates the negative expectations that many adults hold toward youth.

In *West Side Story*, the adult blames youth for the tragedies they experience. Similarly, the current media is replete with blame for the negative actions of youth. Shocking headlines saturate news media such as, "A life of guns, drugs, and now, killing, all at 6" (*New York Times*, 2000 March 2), or "Shooting was planned and calmly carried out, police say" (*New York Times*, 2001 March 7 )—Headlines that exaggerate and sensationalize youth's actions. Such media bias against youth seemingly fuels adults' anti-youth sentiments. Prior to 9/11, several national polls of adults' attitudes toward youth revealed that most adults described youth as wild, dangerous, irresponsible, lazy, and in some cases, a threat to national security. [1]

Youth did not create the circumstances in which they live but adults often ignore mediating circumstances and blame and bash youth instead of providing help and guidance (e.g., Males, 2000). Youth live in a world where 20% of them live in abject poverty (Proctor & Dalaker, 2002); where single parenting is growing at a rapid pace (Fields & Casper, 2001); where the gap between the haves and the have nots is wide and continues to grow (US Census Bureau, 1998); where the media saturates society with attractive mass marketing of dangerous products like tobacco, alcohol, and products; where youth are targets of violent entertainment (Pitofsky, et al., 2000); where accessibility to guns and alcohol are common; and where youth are left alone for larger periods of time than ever before (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1999). Yet still, youth are expected to excel, ignore peer pressure, not have sex, not drink, not smoke, not cheat and not rest.

Many adults, when asked their opinions of youth in general, assert that youth are lazier, wilder, and more dangerous than ever (Farkas & Johnson, 1997). Of course, generational conflict has always existed and the joke, "I had to walk 10 miles in my bare feet each way to school when I was a kid" elders share with the younger generation continues. But, this friendly taunting has taken a dangerous turn as animosity towards youth grows. This is evident in policies and attitudes toward youth that are punitive and harsh in nature. For example, in the post Columbine era, heightened fear of youth has led to students being expelled, suspended, and arrested at increasingly alarming rates (Astor, Meyer, & Behre, 1999).

The educational terrain is no exception to this trend. Ever since the launching of Sputnik, the urgency to increase student achievement has persisted (e.g., Nichols & Good, 2000). However, today's students face unprecedented circumstances in a high accountability, high stakes testing environment where labeling schools as "failing" on the front page of newspapers

has become common practice. This public display of youth (and school) bashing abhorrently communicates to students that they are not good enough. To date, the effects of societally imposed low expectations are still unclear. However, given the known deleterious effects of low expectations at the classroom/school level (Weinstein, 2002), the probability that it will have negative consequences is extremely high.

Elsewhere (Nichols & Good, in press) we have reviewed a wide range of topics (including education) critical to the youth experience and for each, we have explored three main arguments. First, we show how the media fuels negative views of youth. Second, we illustrate how an "averaged" perspective of youth is extremely misleading because (a) youth are much more varied than presented in the press, and (b) the circumstances surrounding youth behavior plays an important, yet overlooked, role in their lives. Lastly, we argue for critical investments into proactive approaches that help youth, not punish them. In this paper, we summarize our view of the problem society faces in carelessly socializing youth, suggest why this is happening, give some examples of how it takes place, and argue the need for urgent corrective social policy.

*The Problem of Devaluing Youth*

American teenagers are not valued by American citizens. Even more baffling than society's devaluation of youth are the many Americans who fear and distrust them (Farkas & Johnson, 1997). Young Americans are increasingly seen as needing harsher sanctions if their civil behavior is to be maintained. This is a shocking conclusion because teenagers are vital to society. After all, the care of the elderly is ultimately left to younger societal members as is the very continuance of society. The quality of American life is dependent upon decisions and actions that youth make.

Youth should be viewed as a critical resource. Birth rates are down and older Americans are becoming a greater percentage of the total population. As baby boomers and echo boomers age (Neil & Strauss, 2000), fewer Americans will be available to maintain the various roles required by a productive society. In 1960, children represented 36% of the US population while by 2025, the proportion of children in the US is expected to be lower than 24%. In 2025, more Americans will be 65 or older than between the ages of 5 and 17.[2] Given these demographics, youth's health, education, and their dispositions toward society should be of acute concern to parents and policymakers. Yet, youth are not valued or seen as a good investment (Nichols & Good, in press).

*How Youth are Devalued*

Citizens' attitudes toward youth range from indifference to pejorative. Current polls report the majority of citizens using terms like "lazy" and "dangerous" to describe teens (Farkas & Johnson, 1997). Many adults fear today's youth and characterize them as violent, remorseless, and amoral (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2000). This view is both wrong and counterproductive because many youth do not exhibit these characteristics and negative societal expectations prevent youth from obtaining the guidance and resources they need. Importantly, even for those who do learn to behave negatively, a hostile stance against them ultimately leads to ill-conceived expectations and ineffective guidance (Schneider & Stevenson, 1999).

When youth are devalued, perceptually they become a burden not a priority—evidenced by the large inequities in resources and access to opportunities evident in our culture. An alarmingly high percent of children live in poverty (over 20%), have no medical insurance, attend inadequate and unsafe schools, are abused and neglected (Brick-Panter, & Smith, 2000), are victims of adult violence (Snyder, & Sickmund, 1999), and, more and more youth are legally

killed because of their crimes (more youths are put to death in this country than anywhere else in the world, e.g., Streib 2000). More abhorrently, adults unreasonably expect youth to "rise above" poverty and neglect and to be successful—even when they are offered no help. Youth notice these things.

American students, whether they live in affluence or in poverty, are described harshly but ironically are asked to do more and more. Youth must excel in school, compete in various extra curricula activities, take a part time job, perform community "good will" deeds, and be prosocial regardless of their life circumstances. Youth are pressured to be involved (and successful) in more ways than youth from other parts of the world. One parent put it this way.

> It used to be that we wandered into the College Boards without much thought, looked at a few colleges and sent in our applications. But these days, high school juniors—who are typically 16—often go to tutors or special classes for the tests…Meanwhile, in the day-to-day classroom, it has been drilled into these students that solid junior-year grades are vital for getting into a good college, and they feel this pressure daily, test by test, paper by paper….Even as this is happening, guidance counselors are telling students they really need to start getting a sense of what the college scene is all about…And in a cruel quirk of timing, all of this often coincides with a host of extracurricular pressures, notably that liberating, get-out-of-my-way-world moment: getting a driver's license….Any one of these pressures could be heavy going; when they all converge in the spring of junior year—well, it makes my head spin, and I'm mainly just watching in awe from the sidelines (Herring, 2000)[3]

And, there are many other pressures as well. For example, more American high school students hold jobs while attending school than in any other industrialized country (Greenberger & Steinberg, 1986).

### *Why Youth are Devalued*

Why do adults fail to value youth or to see them as an investment? Why are youth seen as a threat? Many believe that teenagers are naturally aggressive, and thus more likely to engage in risky, wild, and dangerous behavior. Because these citizens view youths' acting out as inevitable and normal, their potential for rudeness, or worse, threatens them. The Surgeon

General's 2001 report on youth violence noted that adults are more fearful of youth than ever (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2001).

Other citizens view today's youth in terms of images they hold of generations past. Nostalgia for yesterday's "golden past" creates a fictional standard against which today's youth—who live in a very different social world—are compared. In education, this is true in that many adults disparage today's youth and their alleged lowered academic achievement in terms of student "aimlessness" and "laziness" (e.g., Steinberg, 1996). However, available evidence suggests that most youth are very motivated and goal oriented; however, they lack proper guidance and adult help to make meaningful career-related decisions (Schneider & Stevenson, 2000). Often, adults erroneously compare achievements and contributions of earlier generations with today's youth as a way to vilify the next generation. This is meaningless practice because of dramatically different social conditions in which every generation lives. Perhaps more than any generation, today's generation is asked to do more than ever before.

Youth are also devalued because their physical attributes strongly remind adults of their lost vitality and opportunities. As mortgages, families, and job responsibilities emerge, the seemingly "carefree" days of being young are lost. Youth are resented because they do not validate or enhance the needs of adults. Ironically, youth are characteristically depicted as self-absorbed; however, in adult-teen relationships, it is often the adult who is egocentric. A Public Agenda poll reports that some adults are hesitant to help youth because they fear being unappreciated (Farkas & Johnson, 1997)! One newspaper report documented one adult's reaction to her daughter, " 'I want to cry a lot …I feel sad because my teen-age daughter ignores me. At times, she says she hates me.'" (Hopson, Hopson, & Hagen, 2001, p.E2). It is difficult for adults, even parents, to put aside their own needs when they relate to youth.

Many adults see youth as a culture to be feared or devalued because the media characteristically present youth negatively, especially in news stories. Teens' abuse of alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and their sexual and violent behavior are front-page news (Males, 2000). In contrast their prosocial accomplishments, when reported, are buried in the back section of the newspaper. Plus there is a constant barrage of newspaper stories that question youth's commitment to educational goals or their personal morality (Nichols & Good, in press). Because some of the events that are negative about youth occur in group settings (e.g., rave parties), it is easy to paint youth's actions negatively and with a single brush.

### *Contradictory Expectations and Exaggerated Beliefs*

#### *Teen Employment*

It is shocking that American teens are viewed as lazy when so many of them work and go to school. American teens work more than students in any other industrialized country. Bracey (1998) compared 12th graders in various countries and found that 55% of American students work more than 3 hours a day while a considerably lower percentage of students from other countries work a comparable amount (Australia, 25%, Canada, 39%, Iceland, 26%, Netherlands, 26%, New Zealand, 27%, and Norway, 27%). Too many citizens judge the capacities of American youth only in terms of how they compare academically internationally; however, American youth are involved in many more activities than their international peers.[4]

There is evidence to suggest that youth do not receive the critical guidance necessary to make good work-related decisions. Schneider and Stevenson (1999) argue that too many adolescents set unrealistic career goals (pursue careers which have far fewer openings available relative to the number of students who want these careers). They report that 5 to 6 times more adolescents want to pursue medical and law-related careers than there are available openings.

They also note that many students are motivated to pursue a career, but often these motivations aren't "aligned" with realistic achievement outcomes or knowledge of educative requirements. For example, they estimate that although 44% of students have aligned ambition (their skills, success expectations, and understanding of their future field is aligned with prospects for a career in that field), a majority of 56% have misaligned ambitions—expecting more or less education than the average person working in their desired position. Adults want youth to be busy and productive, and yet there is evidence that youth are carelessly left alone to negotiate many important decisions.

*Tobacco, Alcohol, Drugs and Teens*

There are many ways in which society communicates ambiguous and often times conflicting messages about tobacco, alcohol, and drugs to youth. Society condemns youth who use illegal or non-prescribed substances, yet America is an over-medicating society. Prescription medication is a billion dollar business, and there are drugs available for most common ailments. But the presence of prescription medicine per se is not what is troubling. Children are repeatedly told that drugs are NOT the solution to life's problems. Yet, when children become a problem, a common reaction is to give them medicine. Ritalin has become an over-prescribed medication for children who are over diagnosed with behavioral disorders (e.g., Purdie, Hattie, & Carroll, 2002).

In terms of tobacco, it is no secret that tobacco companies have a long standing reputation for marketing their product to consumers of all ages. However, it is especially the case, that tobacco companies have targeted youth. After an exhaustive search of online documents released by tobacco executives from the last 40 years advertising, researchers concluded that tobacco companies have been so successful in "hooking" smokers because of their diligence in

examining and monitoring not only the demographics of their target market, but also the wide ranging social attitudes towards their product (Ling & Glantz, 2002). Shockingly, anti tobacco campaigns, which are only now receiving substantial funding (see, for example, see Kelder & Davidson, 1999) have yet to become as smart in influencing youth not to smoke as cigarette makers were in influencing them to smoke.

*Youth Violence*

Americans are misinformed about youth violence, and the media plays a large role in fueling citizen's fears of youth. Over the past 5-10 years, youth crime has been falling while reporting is exploding. For example, Males (2000) found that news reports of youth violence in California, had reached exaggerated levels. In Orange County, statistics showed that violent crime fell 35%, property crimes fell 50%, and homicide rates fell 20% over the period 1992-1999. Yet, reports of murder stories rose seven fold on all major TV networks. News agencies, exaggerating the levels of violence, fueled a belief in the "out of control" teen. Press reports suggested that *dangerous* youths were everywhere and poised to pounce at a moment's notice. Indeed, youth were 3.2 times more likely to be featured in the LA Times violent crime stories than adults even though the crime rate of 30-40-year-old population is growing rapidly.

Bad news about youth is so common, that readers, overlook sensationalistic reporting. Consider the following scenario written to challenge our preconceived notions of how crime is reported.

> A 71-year-old sprays a quiet church with gunfire, four dead or wounded. Another septuagenarian guns down two in a bloody office slaughter. On successive days, graying residents open fire with automatic weapons on dozens of people in senior citizens' centers in Arizona and Michigan, killing or maiming eight. In a picturesque beach community on Monterey Bay, an enraged 61-year-old shoots two neighbors to death over a trivial falling out. An elderly Santa Ana man beats a 14-year-old to death in a rage, tossing his corpse in a ditch.
>
> A generation ago, old folks didn't act like this.

The kindly, rocking-chair codgers of yesteryear are a vanishing breed. Seniors' felony rates jumped 80% from 1975-1999. Today's elderly Californians suffer skyrocketing addiction and death from hard street drugs once unheard of in the grandparent set. In 1998, twice as many Californians over age 60 than under age 20 died from abusing heroin, cocaine, crack, or methamphetamine (Males, 2000).

This scenario depicts real life events. However, it is written to sway the reader into a sensationalistic perspective on elderly violence. As the author has argued elsewhere (Males, 2000), this is how youth violence is typically "spun" to create the perception of youth violence that 'if it can happen, it will.'

*Careless Socialization*

In stark contrast to the perception of the rebellious wild, and violent, adolescent, many teens voice that they want to spend more time with their parents. When given the choice between more money and more time with parents, youth reported they would rather have more time with their parents. In a poll sponsored by The Center for a New American Dream, interviews with 746 youths ages 9-14 showed that 90% of them said that friends are family were "way more important" than things money can buy and nearly six out of ten said they would rather spend time having fun with their parents than head out to the mall to go shopping. Further the poll showed a real problem of "time starvation" among American youth. Nearly two-thirds of those polled said that they wish their parents had a job that gave them more free time to do things together while 13% said that they wish their parents made more money.

This is confirmed in other polls, such as one sponsored Horatio Alger Association which found that most teenagers *want* close relationships with adults and believe that quality interactions are important for future success. Further, many believe in the value of having an active religious life (44%) and making a contribution to society (49%), having a close group of friends (60%), and having close family relationships (84%) for future success. And, 85% of

youth reportedly spent their time in one or more activity such as sports, volunteering, career-oriented clubs, or school publications (Horatio Alger, 2001).

### *Summary*

The title of the widely cited 1983 report, A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) has proven to be an accurate description of the state of our society, although not in the way the report specified. This report erroneously (Bracey, 2000; Berliner & Biddle, 1995) suggested that our students' poor academic performance placed the country at risk. However, our nation is not at risk because youth are underperforming, but because adults are. As Weinstein (2002) describes adult expectations, even teachers', for student performance are inappropriately low and that if students start poorly in school they seldom recover (see also, Good & Nichols, 2001). Yet, there is evidence to suggest that when expectations are increased to reasonable levels, and that when youth are given appropriate instruction and guidance, they can achieve (Weinstein, 2002). Our analysis leads us to the firm conclusion that the basic problem is not defective kids, but a broader society that is careless in its guidance and support of youth (Crockett & Silbereisen, 2000).[5]

### *Changing Expectations: Investing in Youth*

A pro youth stance would be more likely if citizens realized how good youth are. In Table 1, we outline eight factors that illustrate some of the many things to celebrate about youth. Data supporting these claims are presented elsewhere (Nichols & Good, in press). Youth are doing better than expected in many areas and are highly motivated to achieve, have connections with one another and surrounding adults, and look to the future. Disappointingly these basic facts are not realized or are discounted by many adults. This absence of knowledge about youth

creates a difficult perceptual problem to overcome because bad news is more salient in creating enduring images than is good news (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001).

Table 1. What We Should Know About Youth

| |
|---|
| 1. Many youth are energetic and determined to make a difference, |
| 2. Many youth help out, or are willing to help out adults in their community, |
| 3. Youth vary greatly in talents, commitments, needs, and motivation, |
| 4. Many youth are achieving at very high levels, and for some, this is in spite of incredibly busy and hectic schedules, |
| 5. Many youth have excessive amounts of talents that go unrecognized such as in technology or the arts, |
| 6. Most youth are too busy to watch TV, |
| 7. Youth use less drugs, tobacco, and alcohol than assumed, |
| 8. Many youth make positive choices everyday, and for some, they do in spite of peer pressures to conform, |
| 9. Youth want to spend more time with friends and family in lieu of shopping, or having materialistic things. |

There are many ways to enhance the quality of youth's lives (see Table 2). Some of these are readily fixable (spend more time with youth), whereas others require economic investments and strategic planning to be achieved. Yet, adults have ignored "fixable" solutions and denied needed resources for the more complex problems.

Table 2. What We Should Be Doing For Youth

| |
|---|
| 1. Youth have too little contact with adults, |
| 2. Youth do not believe they are listened to, |
| 3. Youth suffer from incredibly high suicide rates, |
| 4. Youth want more education on sex, |
| 5. Youth's biggest reported pressures are bout getting good grades in school and getting into the "right" college, |
| 6. Youth get too little guidance in defining work and career goals, |
| 7. Youth have too few opportunities for safe and enriching after-school activities, |
| 8. Youth get too little sleep. |

To affect positive changes for youth, we must change how we think about them (which in time can influence what we do for them). Figure 1 presents a change model. If adults' beliefs and attitudes became more positive, the cycle of negativity directed toward youth would lessen and, in time, change. Ultimately, youth would respond to these proactive supports, and feeling validated, try to live up to them. Certainly, this model doesn't apply evenly across all youth or adults. There are some adults who passionately advocate for the protection of youth,[6] and there are many youth who are doing well in spite of the cycle of negative expectations that currently exist. And, there are some youth who, even if conditions changed radically, might still behave in undesirable ways because these opportunities come too late. Still, changing the normative societal view of youth from lazy and dangerous to that of an important investment in the future would markedly enhance the quality of life for many youth. In turn, youth who are integrated into society and better educated will pay great dividends to the society that nurtured them. It is simply intolerable that, as a report from Northeastern University found, 5 and ½ million 16-24-year-old youth are out of work, out of school, and out of shape (Sum, Khatiwada, Pond, & Trub'skyy, 2002).

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Figure 1 About Here

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*Core Elements of the Model*

Our model conceptualizes how to change shared belief systems about youth; however, it is difficult to transfer beliefs into action when problems are complex or broadly defined. We believe that if three core elements are applied across populations and problem areas, it will increase the relative effectiveness of any program designed to put positive beliefs into action.

First, youth must be given opportunities to be active participants in their own development and in proposals intended to help them. Simply talking to youth, if done effectively, conveys genuine interest which not only provides direct expressions of support, but also allows youth to have input into sensitive issues that more likely lead to better solutions than if youth had not been contacted. Consider the debacle of drunken youth in Scarsdale, New York where scores of teens are regularly picked up for drunkenness in spite of the fact that the community spends large amounts of money on alcohol awareness education (Gross, 2002). Although money and information is readily available, few youth attend meetings and programs designed to address alcohol-related problems (partly because parents don't spend time in encouraging their teens to discuss and address these problems). When adults show youth they care about their ideas and provide them opportunities to voice them, it sends a powerful message that they are valued.

A second condition we believe critical program implementation is the use of research to continually improve and refine program effectiveness. Research can substantiate what program elements are related to youth success and those which are not, and for accurately defining what works, in what context, and for whom. Ironically, the only segment of society that actively researches youth needs is big business. And, they have found that by paying attention to youth they can market their products more successfully (Zollo, 1999). However, research can be used in other ways—ways that empower youth. For example, high quality research programs might identify strategies that would lead to productive and low cost after school activities that help youth.

Changing this pattern of negativity toward youth increases the chances that youth are better cared for, and many would agree that developing more positive views of youth would benefit society as well. Still, how can societal belief systems that are so entrenched throughout

society (law enforcement, media, policymakers, citizens) be altered? At first glance, such a large and complicated problem evokes anxiety, confusion and ultimately paralyzes action. What can be done?

Even if citizens listen more carefully to youth and make more proactive use of research, it is still difficult to know how to begin because major youth problems are overwhelmingly complex—e.g., "teen pregnancy," "youth violence," and "binge drinking." And often, students, parents, or schools are left alone to deal with these overwhelming problems. To make these problems more realistic, it is necessary to note that these problems are not just personal, parental, or school-related problems. Rather, these are shared societal issues, and recognition of this is the third core element that must be in place for successful change.

*Small Wins*

Drawing upon work by McCaslin and DiMarino-Linnen (2000), we argue that one powerful way to think about affecting a social change in attitudes toward youth, which ultimately would affect how youth are treated, is based on a small wins approach. Karl Weick (1984) defined a "small win" as the acceptance of small successes in pursuit of larger, more complicated ones. He noted that large scale social problems (e.g., pollution, poverty) are so complex that they seem intractable. Complex problems involve seemingly infinite variables and potential solutions. As a result, problem solvers seek solutions that are so ambitious as to be impossible to enact. Weick suggested that effective problem solving in these situations must begin by dissecting the larger, more diffuse problem into smaller, more definable and manageable units.

Across a wide array of topics concerning youth, a small wins mind set can be a powerful way to reorient how we think about youth. In education, one approach might be to focus on the problem of low achievement. Here, there are numerous ways to help more students succeed. For

example, Richard Rothstein (2001) offered a plan which we could consider to be a "small win" approach. He pointed out that a political plan to invest $25-35 billion (or about $500 per student) to raise poor children's achievement scores is misplaced—because often times, large quantities of money are used for approaches that are overambitious, ill-defined, and ultimately ineffective. Spending billions on student testing is often counterproductive because of the competing reasons involved in why students' test scores raise, fall, or stay the same (e.g., teacher effects, background effects, individual differences[7]). He argued a more successful approach might be to focus on a definable problem such as improving the dental health of poor children. Many impoverished children suffer from dental ailments which impede academic progress in schools. If the government only invested $2 billion (a much smaller amount than the original $25 billion) in dental care for these students, the benefits would improve not only student health, but also their ability to concentrate and focus in schools, and in time, their achievement. And then, in better health, youth might benefit from funds used for educational reform. This is but one of the many small wins that we review elsewhere (Nichols & Good, in press).

Adults must think more proactively when it comes to youth. If such changes were instituted, perhaps Doc from *West Side Story* might have said,

> "This world is sometimes unfair and lousy, but always complex and hard. How can I help you make better decisions, become more knowledgeable and competent, and feel better about yourself?"

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[1] Princeton Survey Research Associates (sponsored by *Newsweek* and NBC News). Based on a national telephone survey of 656 adults, conducted in April 1997. in response to the questions "which of the following is a bigger threat to the United States, foreign nations working against us, or young Americans without education, job prospects, or connections to mainstream American life?" 18% said foreign nations, 74% said young Americans, and 8% said "don't know."

[2] Estimates taken from population projections calculated but the US Census Bureau. For specific estimates, see http://www.census.gov/population/projections/nation/summary/np-t3-f.pdf (retrieved November 13, 2002).

[3] Herring, Hubert B. (2000, May 3). A parent's view of 16, the year of competing furiously. New York Times.

[4] In another international comparison, labor participation rates for US youth aged 16-19 was 53.5; Spain, 25.1; Mexico (ages 15-19), 45.0; Japan, 17.0; Greece (ages 15-19) 16.6; Argentina (ages 14-19) 34.4; and Germany (ages 15-19) 32.6. See Committee on the Health and Safety Implications of Child Labor (1998). Protecting youth at work: Health, safety, and development of working children and adolescents in the United States. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

[5] Some have argued that social change (e.g., growing divorce rates, increasing numbers of single parent households, economic fluctuations) create a social environment which affects the transition of adolescence. In the current climate, not enough is being done to help youth cope with such dramatic changes. For further discussion on the notion of how social changes affects adolescence, see Crockett, L. J., & Silbereisen, R. K. (Eds.) (2000) Negotiating adolescence in times of social change. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

[6] We recognize that there are many non profit organizations created solely to advocate for the rights and safety of children. However, part of the problem is that these agencies are often times poorly funded, hardly visible, and program effectiveness is under researched.

[7] For comprehensive literature review on the teacher effects research on academic achievement, see Brophy, J., & Good, T. (1986). Teacher behavior and student achievement. In M. Wittrock (Ed.), Handbook of Research on Teaching (3rd ed., pp. 328-375). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.

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